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of the Multi-lingual Information Needs of the in and South of Market Communities

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May 10, 1993

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An Investigation of the Multi-lingual Information Needs of the Tenderloin and South of Market Communities

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For: the Main Library, San Francisco Public Library
May 10, 1993

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Summary

The purpose of the effort described in this report was to develop a survey of agencies in the Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods serving people for whom English is not their primary language. The goal of the survey was to uncover the information needs of these agencies and their clients, in order to help the Main Library tailor its services to the interests of the community.

After conducting nearly a dozen background interviews, it was discovered that the community has been surveyed by the Library on numerous occasions, for a variety of reasons. These surveys did not result in service changes that were noticeable to the agencies interviewed for this report. It was therefore concluded that doing another survey would further antagonize the community without providing much information that was new. Instead, it is recommended that activities which will help spawn alliances between the Library and the Tenderloin and South of Market neighborhoods be pursued.

Introduction

The Main Library in its role as a neighborhood branch serves two separate communities: the Tenderloin and South of Market. These neighborhoods have some characteristics in common, but also are quite distinct from each other. Especially of concern for this project is the fact that both areas have a high number of people for whom English is not a first language and whom have varying degrees of comfort level speaking, reading and writing in English.

In order to serve these communities better, the Main Library proposed developing a survey of community agencies that deal with these populations. This survey would gather:

1) Service description of agencies serving this population;
2) Descriptions of the agencies' information needs and methods of meeting those needs;
3) Agency perspectives on the information needs of their clientele;
4) An assessment on the part of agencies as to how well the library is meeting the information needs of the agencies and their clients;
5) The role agencies see the library playing to better meet those needs.

An effort singly devoted to this type of information gathering had never been done by the Main Library, although it was later discovered that surveys for specific grants had been frequently conducted in the community. At the outset it was acknowledged that a survey of agencies could not substitute for direct contact with people in the community, but would instead provide a different component of the picture.

A rough community profile was developed and neighborhood walk-throughs were conducted. A sample of key community agencies dealing with a variety of issues were then targeted for pre-survey interviews. These interviews provided a background understanding of the issues facing agencies and the community so that the final survey would more

accurately and specifically elicit information on critical concerns. This also helped develop a list of other organizations that were seen as central to the community.

Additionally, library staff were interviewed in order to discover their impressions of the types of information people were coming in to get, the types of barriers people were facing, and the information about the community that would be helpful to them to know in order to serve the community better.

Community Profile

. While the Tenderloin and the South of Mission have some things in common--a high degree of multi-culturalism, low-income households and a certain degree of crime--they are also quite different. The Tenderloin is a much more established residential neighborhood than the South of Market community. It has it's own city-wide known newspaper and clearer definable boundaries that set off a geographically smaller area in contrast to the South of Market. Additionally, the Tenderloin seems to have a greater number and diversity of community agencies to serve residents.

The combined service area is composed of 18 census tracts, as divided in the 1990 Census. They are:

117	123	176.02	179.01	227
120	124	176.98	180	607
121	125	177	201.98	
122	162.98	178	226	

The 1990 Census was the primary source of data for this community profile. For a more detailed profile, the Census however, could not be used on its own; the picture it creates must be confirmed and filled in by statistics from the School Department, INS, other government agencies and community organizations. Within the limitations of the Census information, the purpose of the data that follows is to provide a rough sketch of the community.

ETHNICITY/RACE

The ethnic and racial breakdowns, according to the 1990 Census are detailed in Table 1. Targeting those whose primary language is not English, the top five groups with the highest population numbers are: Hispanic/Latino/Chicano (9,745); Chinese (7,160); Filipino (4,789); Vietnamese (2,157); and Cambodian (770). Breaking down the

Hispanic/Latino/Chicano population further, the greatest group of people have their origins in Mexico. There are also many people from Cuba, El Salvador and Nicaragua.

Table 1: Ethnic and Racial Breakdowns/1990 Census

White	29,862
Hispanic/Latino/Chicano	9,745
African-American	7,655
Chinese	7,160
Filipino	4,789
Vietnamese	2,157
Cambodian	770
Japanese	767
Asian-Indian	704
Native American	504
"Other"	401
Korean	377
Laotian	303
Other Asian	235
Pacific Islander, non-specified	125
Hawaiian	118
Thai	85
Guamanian	85
Melanesian	47
Hmong	20
Micronesian Other	14
Polynesian Other	10
Samoan	5

LANGUAGE NEEDS

The people in these ethnic or racial groups have several different types of barriers to library use, many of which are language-based. Filipino people, for example, employ both Tagalog and English, depending on the type of information they are using. Some people in all of these communities have literacy issues in regards to their primary languages. It is not clear that print materials are always appropriate within any given community.

According to the 1990 Census, the four languages, excluding English, that have the highest number of households using them at home are Chinese (7,161), Spanish/Spanish-Creole (6,755), Tagalog (3,875) and Vietnamese (1,266). Surprisingly, there are few households using Khmer (519), less than the number using German (543). This statistic seems at odds with the population breakdown in Table 1, perhaps indicating the inefficacy of the Census at reaching and communicating with all households.

AGE

The age category with the greatest number of people is the 30-34 (7,602) year range, followed by 25-29 year olds (7,168) then 35-39 year olds (6,103). Combining all categories for people 19 years of age and under, the total population of children is 8,790, not that much higher really than the 30-34 year group. The majority of people in the community then are working age adults. This does not tell us who the majority of patrons are, nor is it meant to imply that children, young adults or seniors should not have services targeted to their needs.

INCOME

The 1990 Census bases its household income figures on 1989 income. As can be seen from Table 2 below, the majority of people fall into two yearly-income categories: $5,000-$9,900 (4,420) and $15,000-24,9000 (4,294). Keeping in mind that these are household

incomes, it is clear that most people are living below the poverty level or just barely above it.

Table 2: 1989 Household Incomes

$0-4,900	1,993
$5,000-9,900	4,420
$10,000-14,900	2,861
$15,000-24,900	4,294
$25,000-34,900	2,901
$35,000-49,900	2,462
$50,000-74,900	1,725
$75,000-99,900	696
$100,000+	605

SCHOOLS

There are almost no neighborhood schools that serve children from the South of Market or Tenderloin areas. All children must take public or private transportation to get their education. South of Market elementary age children attend Basey Carmichael School in the South of Market. Middle school age children go to Potrero Hill Middle School on Potrero Hill, and high school age children go to Mission High in the Mission.

Tenderloin elementary children go to one of three schools: Treasure Island, on Treasure Island; Bryant Elementary in the Mission; and George R. Moscone in the Mission. Middle school children go to Francisco Elementary in the North Beach area and high school age youth go to Galileo in the Marina--North Beach area.

Background Interviews

As mentioned previously, both staff and selected community agencies were informally interviewed in order to develop a better understanding of the information needs of the community. The results of these interviews will be discussed in detail in the next section.

STAFF

Main Library staff members were interviewed from many different departments: Information Services; Humanities; Children's Services; Business and Science. The purpose of these interviews was to get a sense of the types of questions clients who fit the target profile currently came to the library to ask and what kinds of information would be useful to gather in the survey to help librarians better serve clients. The interview questions that guided these discussions were:

1) What kinds of information needs do current patrons from this service area have now?
2) How well, in terms of both collection and staff, do the staff feel they are able to fill these information needs?
3) What do they feel would encourage library use?
4) What kinds of information about current and potential users would assist in serving those users?
5) What kinds of resources, programs, etc. would be useful in helping staff better meet current and potential user needs?

AGENCIES

Eleven agency interviews were conducted with organizations such as West Bay Pilipino Multi-Services Corporation and the Tenderloin Times. For a complete list of agencies see Appendix A. The purpose of these interviews was to get a better sense of the concerns and issues of the community from the agency perspective and to also get referrals for other agencies to either interview or to send the final survey.

A guideline set of question helped elicit the same types of information from each agency:

1) What kind of work does your agency do?
2) Who are your primary clientele?
3) What kinds of information does your agency need beyond client related needs(i.e. foundation information., legal information.)
4) Where do you get this information?
5) Do your clients ask for help with problems that you are unable to solve?
6) What kinds of problems are those?
7) What kinds of information would be useful in solving those problems?
8) Do you use the Main Library to assist you in your work? How?
9) How could the library be useful to your clientele in meeting their information needs?
10) What other community agencies do you think we should speak with in designing this questionnaire?

Both staff and agency representatives were asked if they would be willing to review a draft version of the questionnaire to see if it made sense and would achieve its objective.

Findings

The information gathered and reported here is not meant to be a complete reflection of the issues and needs of community agencies and community members. This section conveys the interests and concerns of agency employees and directors that were disclosed in interviews to find background information for developing the final survey.

AGENCIES

Two broad categories of agencies and employees that were encountered. First, there were those who had little contact with the library and didn't know much about what services were available. These people tended to have been at their jobs for a shorter period of time and did not seem to be part of the community. For example, they indicated, although they were not prompted to do so, that they did not live in the community or that they did not really know much about it beyond the particular niche of their agency.

The second type of agency and agency representative was much more established and in touch with the needs, issues and history of the community. These people had a clear idea of the what community members were dealing with on a day to day level. They also had a clearer, though not complete, understanding of services available at the library and where to go for what wasn't at or easy to get at the library. Perhaps most importantly, they had a concrete understanding of the history of the library in the community, and the problematic relationship that continues to exist.

The information needs of the agencies and the communities they serve that fit the profile of the scope of this report are quite diverse. Many agencies are not aware of the resources that are available for themselves and their clients at the library that could address these needs.

Financial Information Needs

Agencies need a variety of financial information, mostly having to do with grants. Organizations that deal with issues such as housing need access to a wider variety of financial information. To fill these needs, more established agencies and their representatives tend to contact the Foundation Center, specific foundations they know about, appropriate city departments, or colleagues. Contacting colleagues seems to be most favored by those who are newer in their jobs and therefore are not as familiar with the mechanisms for getting information.

Legal Information

Across the board, agencies use their own informal networks for getting legal information. Colleagues were consulted first, then attorneys retained by the agency.

Civic/Government Information

Civic/government information, such as housing codes or social service regulations, is gathered by contacting other agencies or calling city departments directly. Agencies also mentioned the need for demographics and other descriptive, statistical types of data. Established agencies gathered this information from the library, school district, and the INS. Newer agencies or newer employees were more at a loss as to sources for this data. Finally, some agency employees expressed a need for information about different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups in the community.

Client Questions and Problems Beyond the Agency Service Scope

Client needs that went beyond the scope of the agency were an issue for almost every organization interviewed, except for those agencies who have as their mission a universe of services. The greatest need expressed was access to a good, up-to-date service agency listing, dealing with problems such as mental and physical health problems, family issues,

education, housing, jobs, etc. Some type of dependable information-and-referral system, similar to the Berkeley Information Network, is badly needed by these organizations and their clients. In lieu of such a system, agencies consult their Rolodexes, use various resource books that have been created by different organizations and communities (for example United Way's service agency directory) and also refer clients to the library. There was some concern that clients end up being bounced around to many different locations before getting the information they need, and that the information they did receive might not be accurate.

Client Needs

Community agencies serving this target population address a spectrum of people with a variety of needs. Clients need survival information regarding housing, immigration and the welfare system. They are looking for information about public schools, education for themselves and their children, jobs, money management, resume writing, starting up small businesses such as restaurants and taxes. General mental and physical health information is needed, along with information on marital and family problems, hygiene, AIDS, dealing with aging parents and child care. Additionally, information on cultural heritage, histories and current information of native countries, local ethnic histories is desired. Final, general information on interests on "hobbies," such as gardening would be used.

There is also a great variety of language needs. The YMCA Youth Services staff person felt that teens, as opposed to younger children, are not as interested in materials in their native, or their parent's native, language as their parents would like them to be. However, information in English about issues and figures important to their communities would be interesting to teens. The Director of the Westbay Pilipino Multi-Services mentioned that Pilipinos are interested in materials in both English and Tagalog, depending on the type of information. He suggested that materials purchased for the Pilipino community be labeled

and cataloged in both Tagalog and English, so that the community could easily identify that information as being for them. Members of the new Vietnamese Community Center expressed an interest in Vietnamese language materials on religion, important religious figures and Vietnamese history. They felt that currently the information on Viet Nam was predominantly focused on the war to the exclusion of other issues that were of equal interest to the community.

The format that information comes in is also an issue. The Tenderloin Self Help Center suggested that videos on jobs, housing and healthcare would be more useful to some members of the community than print materials. The Vietnamese Community Center also suggested that videos of Vietnamese cultural performances would be of high interest in the community.

STAFF

The main underlying problem that most staff members spoke to was a lack of information in the languages the community is comfortable using and lack of publicity about the information and services that are currently available. However, the children's department has been able to acquire materials in a variety of languages and do successful outreach. Another significant concern staff mentioned was the current ability to meet the different language needs of the community. As far as information about the community that would assist in offering better service, staff members wanted a clearer idea of what the community was interested in.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE LIBRARY AND THE COMMUNITY

The intent of the survey and the purpose of the background interviews was to focus on information needs in general, and not on the services the library offers now. However, it seemed important to get some sense of how people felt about the library. Discussions on

this topic brought up many criticisms and suggestions on the part of community agencies, directly affecting the final recommendations of this report.

Criticism and Commentaries

Several important and established agencies in the community were very critical of the library. Directors of Glide Memorial United Methodist Church and the Center for South East Asian Refugee Resettlement both expressed severe concerns about the library and its relationship to the community. All mentioned that the library has interviewed and surveyed the community on numerous occasions, but that no changes have occurred, and that there are no services and information relevant to the needs and interest of the community at the library. This sentiment was an undercurrent of a phone message left by the Bay Area Women's Resource Center and of the interview with the West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service Corporation.

There was a general consensus that the library was not interested in being a part of the community, and that this sentiment was largely shared by the community as a whole, not just agency directors. All of these people felt that the library is an important resource with incredible potential for a productive partnership between the library and the neighborhood. At the same time, they were skeptical of the library's willingness and ability to realize this potential.

There were also more specific criticisms. Westbay Pilipino Multi-Service Corporation felt that it was impossible to see the Main Library as the South of Market neighborhood branch because it was too far away. The Director felt that a true neighborhood branch was called for. The community was hungry to read and the library could be a unique component in an effort to strengthen the sense of community and neighborhood. Interestingly enough, many organizations in the Tenderloin also said that the library was too far away. The distance they were describing was not just a geographic distance, but more of a psychological

distance; people feel that it's not really for them, but if there were a branch actually in the Tenderloin, they would be more comfortable using it.

Many organizations expressed that parents were concerned about their children's safety in the library. This seemed two-fold: a fear of the neighborhood and a sense that even the library itself is not a safe or friendly place. Additionally, it was felt that even if people made it to the library, there really weren't any materials for them. Furthermore, the layout of the building is confusing; it's difficult to know where to go, especially for those not comfortable reading or speaking English.

Suggestions

A number of suggestions were mentioned and reiterated by many agencies. Some are easier to implement than others, but all have merit:

1) A brochure, translated into all the appropriate languages, that explains what is available at the library, including perhaps a description of some of the limitations, for example which languages the staff can use and understand;
2) Orientations and presentations at different community centers and agencies specifically geared towards the interests and needs of those who use that agency.
3) Special tours of the library tailored to specific groups and their interests. These would not be just general tours, but would provide really useful information. For example a tour for the Vietnamese Community about how to find information about small business, a need expressed by the new Vietnamese Community Center;
4) Better signage, all over the library, that directs people, in all the necessary languages, to the different sections of the library. This includes signage outside of the library that would let people know that the building is a library. As an aside, many people, no matter what language they are most comfortable speaking, can't tell that the Main Library is a library.
5) Deposit stations in community centers or separate buildings. Variations of this were expressed by many different agencies.
    a) The Vietnamese Community Center is interested in housing a Vietnamese Collection. They felt this would help get people aware and interested in the library.

b) The Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corporation suggested a multi-cultural reading room. This would reflect the diversity of the community and be a place that everyone could use.

c) Similar to this is the idea previously mentioned of having a branch in the South of Market.

6) Participating in community events. There are community events in both the Tenderloin and South of Market, sponsored by the city and by organizations. The library has had no presence at these events, which further underscores the feeling that the library is not really interested in being a part of the community. Having tables at fairs, presentations, etc. would increase the visibility of the library and show a desire to be a partner in both of these neighborhoods.

Recommendation

It is clear from the background interviews that doing another survey would further alienate and antagonize the community, especially key agencies with whom it would be good for the library to create partnerships. It is probable that enough information has been gathered from previous surveys to establish a basic understanding of the needs, interests and problems of the community.

Taking this beginning understanding and actually implementing some of the suggestions made by agencies would be more useful than another survey. These could be seen as test projects to begin to create alliances in the community. Feedback from these projects could be used to augment the library's understanding of the needs of the service area, and could also be used to refine and develop other projects.

This approach would go a long way towards gaining confidence from community members and in the long run would provide more useful information about the community than a survey could gather. Alliances with agencies and community members would be created that would bring resources in to inform the library about how to better meet the needs of the community.

Appendix A: Agencies Interviewed

Career Resources Development Center 655 Geary Street, SF 94102	Contact: Rachael 775-8880
Center for South East Asian Refugee Resettlement 875 O'Farrell San Francisco, CA 94109	Contact: Vuong Vu-Duc 885-2743
Tenderloin Neighborhood Development Corp 230 Hyde, SF 94102	Contact: Yvette Robinson 776-2151
Tenderloin Self Help Center 191 Golden Gate Ave, SF 94102	Contact: Franklin Smith 554-0518
Tenderloin Senior's Organizing Project 220 Golden Gate Ave #410, SF 94102	Contact: Lydia Ferrante 928-8767
Tenderloin Times 220 Golden Gate Ave 3rd Flr, SF 94102	Contact: Josh Brandon 776-0700
Vietnamese Community Center 835 Larkin Street, SF 94109	Contact: Jim Nguyen or Minh Tam 931-1246
West Bay Pilipino Multi-Service Corporation 965 Mission Street, Suite 500, SF 94103	Contact: Ed Dela Cruz 882-7803
YMCA ESL 220 Golden Gate Ave, SF 94102	Contact: Tania Orbeck 885-0460
YMCA Senior's Program 220 Golden Gate Ave, SF 94102	Contact: Jane Holt 885-0460
YMCA Youth Services 220 Golden Gate Ave, SF 94102	Contact: Olen Simon 885-0460